

# THE RÉCIT AND CHRONIQUE OF FRENCH CANADA

by

CHARLES FREDERICK WARD

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MONTREAL  
LIBRAIRIE G. DUCHARME,  
36 a rue Notre-Dame ouest.











# The RÉCIT and CHRONIQUE of French Canada

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CHARLES FREDERICK WARD, M. A., Ph. D.,  
Associate Professor of Romance Languages,  
the State University of Iowa

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with

## INTRODUCTORY PRÉFACE

by

CAMILLE ROY, Ph. D., Litt. D., Litt. Lic. [Paris],  
F. R. S. C.,

Professeur à l'Université Laval, Québec.

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# **The Récit and Chronique of French Canada**



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## Introductory Preface

We are happy to present to readers the "*Récit and Chronique of French Canada*" by Dr. Charles Frederick Ward, professor at the University of Iowa. These pages which we have perused with lively interest contain very clear analyses, judicious observations, a sort of general picture of one of the most living chapters in the history of French Canadian literature.

We thank Mr. Ward for having had the generous thought of making known to the English speaking public of Canada and the United States our French Canadian literature. We know that a too high barrier separates the intellectual life of the two races which dominate Canada. Doubtless the two literatures English and French ought to develop according to the genius peculiar to each one of the races the thought and life of which they express, but it would be desirable that cultivated minds in both peoples of this country should know better the numerous works written both in English and in French which are published each year and which represent the higher and deeper of the two principal elements of our population.

At the time when by so many efforts it is being sought for to bring these two elements together, to make known to each other and to make penetrate each other these two mentalities, the work of Mr. Ward will contribute in great measure to assure the success of these praiseworthy attempts.

Mr. Ward could not have chosen a better subject to make English speaking readers acquainted with the soul of French Canada. The chroniques, the contes, the légendes, are the habitual and intimate expression of the thought of a people. History has undoubtedly, in a sense, more importance: it relates the events which constitute the essential texture of national life. But, beneath *la grande histoire*, there is *la petite*. And this latter is composed precisely of all those little facts, of all those popular sentiments, of all those récits, of all those légendes, in which is marvellously reflected a life more intimate, occasionally more profound, which is the very life of the people, which is the free expression of the soul of the race. *La grande histoire* is made on the summits, in the light of the peaks, to which at certain hours the national life ascends; *la petite*, is made at the bottom of the valleys, where the picturesque villages are hidden, by the intimate hearths of families, in the discrete light in which the scenes of popular life are unrolled and nowhere does one find more exactly than in the homes of the people the realization of the thoughts and aspirations of a race.

Professor Ward has, therefore, been well inspired when he thought of analyzing for the English speaking public the récits and chroniques of French Canadian literature.

After having made known in a good introduction the larger outlines of the history of our French Canadian literature, the obstacles which long prevented its expansion, the general spirit which animates its works, he follows in each period of this history the development of the genre, which he is studying and analyzing. From the abbé Casgrain, who wrote our first légendes to our most recent chroniqueurs, he gives to each author the place which is befitting to him in the history of the genre, and he accompanies his analyses with appreciations, which have seemed to us, in general, very judicious.

The names of Casgrain, of Taché, of Buies, of Faucher de Saint-Maurice, of Fabre, of Legendre, of Ernest Gagnon, of Routhier, to speak only of the dead, will remain among the most representative of the literary genre, the development of which in Canada had been studied in this book.

We wish the best success for Mr. Ward's work. We dare to hope that it is the first of a series in which one will see studied successively all the literary genres, which have developed in French-Canada. Mr. Ward will have accomplished a work both artistic and patriotic in composing by sections a tableau général of our literary life.

Already he deserves for this first essay the encouragement of the public and particularly the gratitude of my French Canadian compatriots.

**Camille Roy,**  
**Professeur à l'Université Laval,**  
**Québec.**









## Preface

Those who think (as most probably do) of literature in French as existing only in France may be surprised to have their attention directed to a literature in French already quite voluminous and characterized by many remarkable qualities, produced outside of France and indeed under another flag.

This literature should interest especially not only Canadians, but also Americans, for while the French Canadian population in Canada is about two millions, there are one million five hundred thousand under the Stars and Stripes. Furthermore the international boundary line between the United States and Canada presents not the slightest barrier to travel and particularly in the Summer picturesque French Canada receives thousands of visitors.

The French Canadian people are determined to develop their language and literature. It is reasonable to suppose that they will be able to do this better and better as time progresses. This will be a distinct advantage generally, since they will thus make a contribution to variety of culture on a continent, where levelling and uniformizing processes are so powerful that most cities and communities thereon differ principally in climate.

It is a singular tribute to British administration that the French Canadian people, given an invitation to join the neighboring republic, unanimously refused. They found by experience that they possessed greater liberty where they were and more chance of developing in a smaller nation than as a small element in a much larger nation. There has been a certain amount of friction and memories of the conquest die hard. However, the way seems clear for cooperation of the two races in the development of a great commonwealth, the progress of which may be promoted better thus than by one race of homogeneous culture.<sup>a</sup>

This may be greatly helped, if it should be generally realized by all English speaking races that the acquisition of the French language is for them whether for commercial, educational, diplomatic or military reasons a practical necessity, to say nothing of its desirability for cultural reasons.<sup>b</sup> It is not too much to say that there is every reason for requiring every student in the high schools and universities of the English speaking countries to attain a good (including a speaking) knowledge of French. With English and

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a) Cf. The farewell address of Lord Dufferin, Governor General of Canada, to the Legislative Assembly of Quebec, July, 1878. **The History of the Administration of H. R. H. Frederick Dufferin.** etc. Montreal, Lovell, 1878, p. 748.

b) Cf recent developments in Gr. Britain as illustrated by reports of the Committee to inquire into the position of modern languages in the educational system of Gr. Britain and the Report on the Teaching of French in the Secondary Schools of London.

French, it has been truly said, one can go anywhere and get along.

Those familiar with the interesting development of literature in the English language outside of the mother country i. e. in the United States, Canada, Australia, South Africa, etc., who have observed the preservation of certain qualities deeply rooted in the common stock of a great race and literature and the combination therewith of other new qualities characteristic of the new domains, which the race has occupied, will be interested in observing a similar process in French Canadian literature. In each case the new product is different, yet not in any sense foreign.

There are good reasons for the comparatively slow development of French Canadian literature. This has one advantage for the literary critic. He can in a way distinctly unusual follow the entire course of development of a literary *genre* through the years without facing an almost hopeless task as to quantity. Not since ancient times has this been possible in exactly the same way as it is with French Canadian literature.

To work in a new field, however, is difficult, especially in a field of such comparatively recent development as the present study, the title of which the reader is asked to consider as somewhat elastic.

If this possesses any merits, credit therefor is due to the kindly and helpful advice of the abbé Camille Roy, professor of the *Petit Séminaire* of Quebec and of Laval University, whose work in advancing, interpreting and contributing to French Canadian letters is so well known and so generally appreciated. To him more is owed than can well be expressed. For the faults of this study the author alone is responsible.

C. F. W.

**The State University of Iowa,  
March, 1921.**









## Introduction

Until 1760 Canada was called of course *la Nouvelle France*. The outcome of the decisive battle fought by Montcalm and Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham, the significance of which was not fully appreciated at the time any more than the farseeing statesmanship of Pitt, brought *la Nouvelle France*, which with better support from the French crown might have become a French empire in the West, under the British flag ; and also removed from the colonies to the South the fear of attack—a matter, which, as is well recognized now, was of primary importance in their later declaration of independence from the mother country. On account of the broad tolerance of the British government, however, the French part of Canada remained French after the conquest even in such matters as legal procedure and holding of land.

It was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries particularly that France colonized *la Nouvelle France*, chiefly from the provinces of Normandy, Brittany, Maine, Poitou, Saintonge and Anjou (i. e. the North and West of France). Naturally these colonists, even in the new environment which was so different from their native land, retained the outstanding qualities of their race such as artistic ability, love of psychological realism, addiction to clarity of reasoning, logic and the theory of general ideas together with the enthusiasm and mysticism characteristic of Northern France.

The life they had to lead as pioneers of a new world : duties as farmers, Indian fighting, military and diplomatic contests with the Thirteen Colonies, caused certain changes in their character, which later forces, e. g. the initial loss of enterprise of a conquered race, which had not learned that it was in reality free, the lack for many years of contact with France and the influence of the dollar worship in the neighboring republic caused other changes. Thus it is clear first, why literary development was slow ; and second, why it acquired a somewhat different character from that of the literature of France.

The language brought to Canada was that of the French seventeenth century, the golden age of French Classicism. The early educational programs for reading texts consisted almost entirely of the classic masterpieces, which of course were admirable, but deficient in certain qualities as an exclusive intellectual diet. While in France the language was undergoing important and necessary changes (particularly in vocabulary), books in French Canada available for

reading were as above stated. Thus the language of French Canada remained so to speak in a state of arrested development making only comparatively few additions from the dialects of the provinces of origin or by newly coined words.

### General Characteristics of French Canadian Civilization

Of course, as we would expect, the fundamental qualities of French civilization are also to be found in French Canada. Hence we have both the love of art and the ideals of art in the different branches : architecture, sculpture, music, etc. in picturesque Quebec and elsewhere.

The ability of the French woman to establish an artistic interior, the cult of domestic privacy, the attention paid to family duties, even the refinements of personal adornment and the expertness of fashioning the toilette crossed the sea with this pioneering race.

Intellectual qualities such as logic, reason, clearness of thought, ability to penetrate the exterior of prejudice, convention, custom to the real idea beneath likewise are to be found as characteristics of the civilization of French Canada, characteristics, which have at times led to very interesting and entertaining debates on the floor of the Dominion Parliament and Senate, when they have been pitted against the different characteristics of English speaking Canadians. These qualities needless to say, whether in the arena of politics or in business or elsewhere have enriched Canadian development in a remarkable and unique manner.

While there have been and are leaders on both sides, who have been animated by narrow, prejudiced views, unable to join forces for the development of the country as a whole, a splendid roster of fine personalities will ever stand forth as an undying record of men who have combined the genius of two races to promote the progress and prosperity of the whole land.

The natural gaiety and wit of the French, a very wholesome counterpoise to the more serious, sober character of the Anglo-Saxon also must be mentioned. While undoubtedly it is not as fine or as sophisticated as in the mother country, it possesses a *bonhomie*, a heartiness and perhaps a wholesomeness which the latter somewhat lacks. It is familiar to the observer of French Canadian manners.

Then naturally also there are certain qualities which are native to French Canada itself. Just as the great commonwealths of the English speaking people have developed new qualities in the midst of vast new territories, so with the inhabitants of the former *la Nouvelle France*.

The country itself with its great extent, its new fauna and flora, its wonderfully picturesque landscapes, its capacities for adventures and enterprises on land and sea has been of very considerable influence on the population thereof. The French Canadian loves his new *patrie* with a deep and abiding affection and loves to hear about its legends and its stories. He is, as has been demonstrated, ready to defend it with his life's blood, although in part as yet unable to

see why he should cross the seas to do so.<sup>a</sup> To fully appreciate French Canadian literature and civilization therefore, we should know something of the land itself.

Surrounded as he is by strong influences from the English speaking parts of the continent with their intense practicality and devotion to commercial success in particular—and of course these have not been without effect on him—the French Canadian has been greatly concerned about the growth of his own nationalism, which to some pessimists seemed at one time to be falling into decadence. This concern and the ardent determination to maintain and keep pure his language, customs, to develop his own literature, even in the midst of unfavorable circumstances, has colored much of the writings of French Canadian authors ; and, if it seems at times a trifle over-eager and bitter, it must be remembered that the circumstances have been difficult and that the recollections of conquest and regrets for what might seem to have been a different ending to the Seven Years' War are hard to forget.

Finally, since we may speak in this brief sketch only of outstanding matters, the civilization of French Canada is distinctly Roman Catholic. The influence of the clergy is supreme and it has accomplished much in causing the country to develop christian ideals of life. No more devoted body of men have ever worked for their race than the priesthood of Canada. Finely educated for the most part, animated by high ideals, sincerely desirous of forwarding education and social service work as well as the more definitely religious aspects of their work, they have given their lives to the welfare of the souls of their parishioners in a manner, which has unified the people in their care (with but few exceptions) against the attacks of sinister doctrines economic or political, a matter which deserves close study. These aspects are of course reflected in the literature of French Canada in a very obvious way. They have worked towards the high moral value of the work produced, which is in strong contrast even to some of the masterpieces of French literature proper.

### **The Four Periods of French Canadian Literature.**

Before coming to the special topic of the book, it may afford a clearer understanding thereof to give the four periods, into which it is usually recognized that French Canadian literature is divided.

#### **I. *The Period of Origins.* (1760-1820.)**

This is the period of first beginnings. Cut off from the old land, discouraged by rankling memories, inexperienced in methods and processes, facing the problem of living, newspaper articles are in the main the only monuments of this age of commencement.

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a) This is not altogether confined to French Canadians. While it is an erroneous attitude, it may presumably pass with greater education in world politics.



## II. *Second Period.* (1820-1860.)

The second period, filled with political agitation, is also distinctly a period of struggle. There was naturally an increase of journalistic endeavor. Patriotic poetry and history, written with intent to develop the national pride and consciousness, were the chief *genres*.

## III. *Third Period—The Pléiade and After.* (1860-1900.)

This begins with the "Pléiade" of 1860 (Octave Crémazie, Louis Fréchette, Pamphile Le May, Alfred Garneau chiefly). They attempted with fair success, particularly in poetry, to lay the foundations for a national literature, and were animated by a zeal that may well be compared to that of Du Bellay and Ronsard. The subject matter of their work was national. Their theme was patriotism. Inspired by their efforts we have the first *récits* and *chroniques*.

## IV. *Literary Revival.* (1900-.....)

This period is too recent to characterize clearly. It contains more works than the previous and there is greater perfection of technique.







## CHAPTER I

# The Récit and Chronique

### 1860-1900

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Created largely by the influence of the *Histoire du Canada* of Garneau and of the poetry of Octave Crémazie the third period opened very auspiciously and soon there began to appear other literary *genres*, of which (in view of the character of the literature of France) it is in a sense most interesting to follow the progress of the *récit* and *chronique*.

In no branch of literature has French genius, it may safely be said, been more successful than in such branches as the *conte* and *récit*. So, as we might expect, it was only a question of time until these should begin in French Canada. We must not of course expect too much of these early days. Many years must elapse before we may encounter a Canadian De Maupassant. Nevertheless, this literature is intrinsically worth while and shows constant improvement.

As we examine attentively and in chronological order the different writers and their works, it is peculiarly interesting to see reflected therein the qualities of French Canadian civilization, which contain many of the fundamental French qualities, yet are different and while lacking of course the excellence and the polished technique of the mother country, possess a unique charm of their own.

The movement of 1860, romantic in its tendencies on account of the great influence of the movement in France thirty odd years earlier, was grouped particularly around Octave Crémazie. The back part of his bookstore in the *rue de la Fabrique* in the city of Quebec, where the newly arrived books were placed, was the meeting place for the enthusiastic members of the "Pléiade". Here many of the authors of the day met and discussed literary questions, an assembly, which itself illustrates a French characteristic. Similar ambitions to those which Ronsard and Du Bellay cherished centuries earlier, occupied these ardent spirits. And, as we reflect upon the extent and resources of the territory their race occupied, much larger and possibly richer than France itself, who shall sneer at what may well be one distant day the ultimate success of their purpose.

To serve as a means for their propaganda reviews were soon founded. *Les Soirées Canadiennes* began in 1861; *Le Foyer Canadien* in 1863.

The splendid confidence of these men was greatly cheered by the firm foundations laid for responsible government by the British North America Act of 1867. The new constitution determined upon after a careful study of the systems of government of Great Britain, the United States, France and the Canadian situation has gained the admiration of the world. Sir John A. Macdonald, the "father of Confederation", and his coadjutors, among whom were Sir Étienne-

P. Taché, Georges-É. Cartier and Hector Langevin from French Canada, were men of sincerity of purpose and breadth of vision. The French speaking inhabitants of Canada soon saw that they had all the realities of freedom, personal, religious, linguistic, together with many privileges derived from membership in the world's first great practical league of nations, which were of no mean value.

In the *récit* and *chronique* it was naturally toward the legends and picturesque aspects of their life that the first writers turned. The exciting events of the immediate past and the physical beauty of the land focussed the attention of these literary pioneers rather than the unsatisfactory present and the still more problematical future.

### abbé Henri-Raymond Casgrain (1831-1904)

In 1860 the abbé Raymond Casgrain began to write *légendes*, an example quickly followed, though he himself turned very soon to historical writing solely.

The most celebrated of his *légendes* is *la Jongleuse*.<sup>a</sup> In this tragic story, strongly impregnated with a didactic purpose, the supernatural is cleverly employed as a sort of pagan background, against which the efforts of the early missionaries, few in number but strong in faith, appear puissant in effect. It is indeed an epic of those early pioneer days, in which the conflict with both the forces of nature and the savages made the life of the settlers a constant struggle. The devotion of the *Canotier* opposes the fierce Iroquois in intrepid feats. The terrible power of *la Jongleuse*, whose name is whispered with awe by the otherwise fearless redskins and the panorama of lavish nature combine to present an atmosphere new and striking to readers familiar only with sophisticated society. Small wonder that with the primitive age still beneath his eyes, so to speak, he could depict it with graphic power.

In *Les Pionniers Canadiens* we have a sanguinary tale, the scene of which is Fort Detroit. An English officer is assassinated by a savage, who tries to make the former's sweetheart drink his blood. Later the savage caught in a venthole is killed by a snake—the whole scene watched by the fiancée, who has prayed for vengeance.

A third, *le Tableau de la Rivière-Ouelle*, deals with the scenes and traditions of the author's birthplace.

### Joseph-Charles Taché (1821-1894)

Joseph-Charles Taché published for the first time in 1861 in *Les Soirées Canadiennes*, *Trois légendes de mon pays*,<sup>a</sup> which form a trilogy : *L'Évangile Ignoré*, *L'Évangile Prêché*, *L'Évangile Accepté*. The purpose, evidently didactic, does not detract markedly (except possibly in the last mentioned) from the interest attached to a thrilling narrative. The first of the series is in many respects the

a ) Quebec 1861)

best. The fight against the Iroquois with its stratagems and bush fighting possesses real verve. The story is told in a simple, direct and forceful style. The language is pure. Of the descriptions, that of the natural surroundings is best, but the pen portrait of the old chief, the Sagamo, is exceptionally fine.

In *Forestiers et Voyageurs, une étude de Mœurs*,<sup>a</sup> 1863, we have an interesting combination of charming naïveté, primitive philosophy and allegory. As the author points out in the preface, the French Canadian population draws naturally from its native poetic funds : its souvenirs of picturesque Brittany, for example. So also we have the combination of *conte* (French) and *légende* (Catholic), which latter exemplifies the *besoin du merveilleux*. The two types Forestier and Voyageur are drawn to the life.

The Canadian forest draped in snow is the point of departure of the story. In this *milieu* appears the hierarchical organization of this primitive society : *le contre-maitre, les bûcheurs, les charretiers, les claireurs and le couque (cuisinier)*. The joyous arrival of the lumbermen on snowshoes is depicted and the joys of their brief leisure. *Père Michel* is introduced and he becomes a sort of dignified *compère* of an extended *revue* of the life described. Like Kipling with "Kim" Taché makes nearly all Canada happen to *Père Michel*. We follow him from birth, shortly after which at one of the carousals customary upon baptismal occasions he almost perishes, having been dropped from a sleigh in charge of excited revellers on the drive homeward, through his twelve years service with the *curé* to his employment with the *seigneur de Kamouraska* as fishing warden. Thence he goes *au bois* in winter and on a fishing sloop in Summer.

The story of his Micmac companion, Noël, is introduced as an *entr'acte*. It serves to present Ikès le Jongleur and his compact with his familiar, Mahoumet. Descriptions of lumbermen's life, voyages on the St. Lawrence and the legend of the savage, who killed a missionary by causing him to drown and thus became a *loup-garou* are interwoven therewith.

Then the scene shifts to the fierce commercial warfare (with real accessories between the North West Trading Company and the Hudson's Bay Company with its significant motto : "*Pro pelle cutem*"). The former company was favored by the Indians and *Canadiens*. The first bloodshed between the rival forces at Fort Qu'appelle is described and its result, the successful plan of the Hudson's Bay Company by its influence with official circles in England to absorb its rival.

Then finally the moral problems of this early society are described and the heroic and effective measures of the Oblates, who follow the lumberjacks wherever they go at no matter what cost in personal hardship.

The book is somewhat lacking in cohesion of plan and finish of style, but it presents truthful and interesting phases of the life of this early society which hold the attention of the reader and make him

a) Best edition: Montreal, 1884.



understand much more completely than he otherwise would the early struggles necessary for later development.

### Pamphile Lemay (1837-1918)

M. Pamphile Le May, who is chiefly known for his poetry, in which he rivalled Fréchette, wrote also an interesting book of short stories: *Contes vrais*.<sup>a</sup>

Le May's main characteristics are his romanticism and his love for Canadian things and people. His subjects are taken from the land he knew and esteemed. He was patriotic and Catholic, a believer in the charm of virtuous life and a sympathetic portrayer of events, which have not indeed the more or less factitious attraction of international romances, but the more solid and more true qualities of entire sincerity.

It is fair to say that he has at times verged on the melodramatic in his *contes*. However, in spite of rather flamboyant titles and mystifications, which seem initially Hoffmannesque at times, the pictures drawn are from the life and the portrayal of characters is from the pen of one who knows. The narratives are in the main simple, rustic tales, some of which suggest certain of the works of George Sand (i. e. the George Sand of the *romans champêtres*).

The first of the series, *Le Bœuf de Marguerite* with its enchanted (?) animal, by means of which its mistress gained recognition of a sort at least in a credulous community is a good example of his ability to tell a story in a simple effective manner which makes the people of that day real to our more sophisticated eyes.

*Baptême du Sang* is a tale of the almost forgotten Rebellion of 1837 in which we follow the fortunes of a young follower of Papi-neau. His love for principles and for a *petite amie*, whose love a faithless friend and secret rival wins, his exile and return and the fate of the traitor are well described.

*Maison Hantée*, *Le Spectre de Babylas* and *Le Baiser Fatal* form a series centering around the treasure buried in a haunted house. The weird and gruesome elements are laid on with rather a thick brush and the plot seems improbable. The characterization, always a strong point with Le May, is very interesting.

*Le Jeune Acrobat* is a story of a boy carried away by gypsies who is afterwards restored to his mother's arms. Its simple pathos has the universal appeal.

Others such as *Sang et Or* (the old legend of the avaricious couple who murder their long absent son, when he returns to their home in the incognito of a wealthy traveller), *Mariette, un conte de Noël* (with certain traits suggestive of the story of Boaz and Ruth), *Les Marionnettes* (the story of a puppet play, which reflects in its impersonations many aspects of the society of that day) illustrate the range of his narrative power.

a) Quebec, 1899.

## Hubert La Rue (1833-1881)

Inspired by the literary patriotism already referred to above Professor Hubert La Rue of Laval University published in *les Soirées canadiennes*, *le Foyer Canadien* and *la Ruche littéraire* various *études de mœurs*, which were later collected for the most part in his *Mélanges historiques, littéraires et d'économie politique*.<sup>a</sup> These articles such as *La Langue française au Canada*, *Les Richesses naturelles du Canada*, *Les Fêtes patronales des Canadiens Français* are directed toward the preservation of the national customs and the dissemination of the principles of christianity. A clear thinker of broad vision, an ardent enthusiast for the realization of the best ideals of his race, Hubert La Rue will be remembered for his works of solid import.

## Octave Crémazie (1827-1879)

Though known almost exclusively for his poetry, Octave Crémazie must also be mentioned for his interesting *Journal du siège de Paris*<sup>b</sup> (1870), which affords glimpses of things Parisian during the famous siege through shrewd Canadian eyes. There is a very familiar sound to some of his observations at the present time of post-war investigations and discussions.

The *Journal* is of course a running commentary written from day to day about all sorts of matters more or less connected with the main event. Many points made are humorous or satiric. *Les informations officielles laissent quelquefois à désirer*, he says near the beginning. Official incompetence on a colossal scale amazes him. One such piece of folly is the appointment—in the midst of sanguinary war—of a commission to change the names of the Parisian streets!

Other graphic parts of the narrative deal—to make merely a brief selection from a wealth of interesting details—with such topics as : the formation of a regiment of amazons (promptly sent back home by order of General Trochu) ; the abolition of the theatrical censorship, which led to all sorts of obscenities ; rampant prostitution ; political division, which reminds Crémazie of Henri Mürger's asking his concierge daily in 1848 : *Sous quel gouvernement ai-je le bonheur de respirer ?*

The more serious part of this very readable diary (which is like a story without a real plot) deals with the forces responsible for the French defeat. General reasons therefor are, according to him : the amazing lack of national union ; political parties which are anxious to gain power even at the expense of national defeat ; incompetence in high places.

The military reasons for failure he considers : the jealousy among army chiefs ; faulty administration (supplies, munitions, etc.) ; inferiority of generals of division (Algeria was not a good school for *generals*, though it did produce brilliant *colonels*) ; long range guns

a) In his *Oeuvres Complètes*, Montréal, 1882, pp. 263-469.

b) 1o Quebec, (Darveau) 1870. 2o Quebec, (Delisle) 1881.

on the German side, which nullified valor and enthusiasm.

Finally he expresses the hope : *Espérons que nous pourrons encore dire de ses guerriers : Gesta Dei per Francos*, a hope which the world has so recently seen realized.

The language and style of the diary are excellent. The content is especially worth while, as it contains a new point of view and facts which, if not new, are at least stated differently and from the new world point of view.

### Henri-Edouard Faucher de Saint-Maurice (1844-1897)

was particularly characterized by a vivid imagination and a desire for adventures. The latter he gratified by taking part in the moving events associated with the career of Emperor Maximilian in Mexico. After remaining to the very end of the Mexican war, he became an official of the Quebec legislature and in his leisure time wrote the story of his military experiences and his travels and also descriptions of French Canadian life.

The experiences of his life and his native genius enabled him to contribute materially to the development of the *conte*. Not only was the literary landscape widened, so to speak, by Mexican scenes, but he was careful also to collect *légendes* and popular tales of the recent past and repolish than for the future. A profound lover of nature, certain of his works reflect, animated by various interesting human events, the superb landscapes of the St. Lawrence and the maritime provinces.

His treatment of his subjects, which is a happy combination of popular manner and scientific exactitude, is fortified by a distinguished, careful and characteristic style.

His works comprise : *De Québec à Mexico* (1874) ; *A la Brunante* (1874) ; *Choses et autres* (1874) ; *Deux ans au Mexique* (1875) ; *De tribord à babord* (1877) ; *En route* (1888) ; *Joies et tristesses de la Mer* (1888) ; *Loin du Pays*, (1889) ; and *Notes pour servir à l'histoire de l'empereur Maximilien* (1889).

### Arthur Buies (1840-1901)

Arthur Buies is the foremost exponent of the *chronique*. Born near Montreal, Buies lived in many parts of the world (British Guiana, Paris as a student, Italy as a Garibaldian soldier, etc.) and saw much of life, including certain aspects of its seamier side. In 1866 he was admitted to the Quebec bar, and almost at once went into journalistic work. For a time he was quite anti-clerical in his views, which permeated his writings. This part of his work is of no particular value. Later he wrote many short witty *chroniques* for various publications, becoming the acknowledged master of this genre.

Besides these he has written several books of descriptive geography : *L'Outouais supérieur* (1889), *le Saguenay et le bassin du Lac Saint-Jean* (1896). *Récits de Voyages* (1890), *les comtés de Rimouski, Matane et Témiscouata* (1890), *au Por-*



tique des Laurentides (1891), la Vallée de la Matapédia (1895).

The *chroniques* have been issued in three compilations: *Chroniques, Humeurs et Caprices*\* (1873), *Chroniques, Voyages*\* (1875) *Petites Chroniques* pour 1877 (1878).<sup>a</sup>

It is impossible of course to resume the content of the *chroniques*. Buies goes here and there, critical faculty ever alert, ability to penetrate the shams and eccentricities of life ever ready. With a quick turn of his imagination he can illuminate the most commonplace happening. The pomposity and manœuvre or the struttings and posings of society folk are equally transparent to his vision. National differences and characteristics are hit off in a vein of almost Voltairian satire. Then suddenly his mood will change to deepest pathos or to poetic descriptions of Canadian natural beauties, which are veritable prose poems.

The first compilation, *Chroniques, Humeurs et Caprices* opens with a "*chronique générale*, wherein he begins his constantly recurring satire of *l'honorable M. Langevin, compagnon du Bain et du Grand-Tronc*, which has a very modern interest in view of the failure of that corporation to succeed with private management.

The next, "*Une élection dans Québec-centre*" continues the same subject with all his batteries of satire turned on a farcical election in a pocket-borough.

With the next, "*Cacouna*", he begins the numerous *chroniques* having travel trips as bases. The Englishwomen, of whom Cacouna is full, repel him (perhaps racially as well as personally). As he says:

*Il fait déjà assez froid sans aller se geler au contact de ces pôles beautés dont les paroles tombent comme des flocons de neige."*

Similar *chroniques* follow: *Souvenir du Saguenay*, *Sur le côté nord, Tadoussac*.

Then comes a "*chronique Québécoise*". "*Faire une chronique québécoise n'implique nécessairement qu'on soit à Québec*", writes Buies. His political adversaries, especially Hon. Mr. Langevin, who returned from British Columbia after having taught the inhabitants thereof to dine, come in for review. The neglectful policy of the municipal government of Quebec is also censured.

Later in introducing a series of *causeries* for *Le National* the author explains humorously his task: *La causerie est le genre le plus difficile et le plus rare en Canada; on n'y a pas d'aptitude. Il faut être un oisif, un propre-à-rien, pour y donner ses loisirs. Je suis tout cela. Mes loisirs consistent à chercher tous les moyens d'ennuyer mes semblables pour leur rendre ce qu'ils me font sans aucun effort. Si je réussis, j'aurai fait en quelques heures ce que Sir George-Étienne Cartier fait depuis vingt-cinq ans sans le vouloir, et surtout sans le croire."*

Then he turns again to travel description with *A la Malbaie* (Murray Bay) and in beautiful, sincere prose pays tribute to Quebec's most charming beauty spot.

A serio-comic treatment of *Les Éboulements* follows. *Je suis arrivé à trois heures du matin par une nuit noire comme la cons-*

a ) Pub. Québec.

*cience d'un ministre fédéral,"* he begins. Contrast is drawn between the beauties of nature and the then lack of necessary accommodations for travellers.

His *chronique* on George-Étienne Cartier, *l'homme de bronze*, takes us back to the arena of politics and is a good example of clever mental *négligée*. Cartier's presentation of a drill shed *édifice ridicule qu'on avait construit à Montréal pour les exercices des volontaires* and the various epithets applied to him are mercilessly ridiculed.

*De Retour à Québec* gives him an opportunity for a tribute to the fine qualities of Lord Dufferin, the then Governor-General, and also to punish the social aspirations of Hon. Langevin (!)

Then *Un voyage dans le Golfe* (Autumn, 1872) carries us through piquant descriptions of Percé and the Baie des Chaleurs.

The *Intercolonial* affords an opportunity for interesting glimpses of the pioneer work in this well built national undertaking. Buies' essential fairness rejoices at the remarkable character of the construction work on this fine railroad system built to last. Incidentally the Hotel Chalmers with the fascinating Sarah receives honorable mention.

The *Chronique Pseudo-philosophique* gives him a chance to rail at the wearisome character of political meetings and assemblies. He describes a new invention (?) of his: *la tribune mécanique*. When an auditor at one of these affairs has his conviction formed (or is bored !), he inserts a lead ball into a tube beside his seat. When more than half of the auditors have done likewise, the speaker by an ingenious piece of mechanism is removed immediately and another substituted, and so on. Probably such an ingenious arrangement would have great success (if it could be carried out)—even greater success than in the imagination of M. Buies !

*Le nouvel An* (1873) introduces a serio-comic vein: *Toujours des feuilles qui tombent, toujours des larmes nouvelles pour remplacer celles qui sont séchées... Ce sont les hommes qui ont divisé les années; vous qui êtes éternel vous ne connaissez pas ces distinctions qui nous mènent au supplice avec des gants lilas et des cravates neuves... Regardez dans le passé; il est plus ou moins lugubre, mais il est passé; vous n'avez plus rien à en craindre: vous savez ce qu'il a coûté et ce qu'il vous réserve.* But the future is very different.

The *Chronique d'outre tombe* (Jan. 16, 1873) is in a philosophical mood on the text: *Dites-moi, que servirait de venir au monde, jouer un jour la ridicule comédie de la vie et puis disparaître?* If the soul is not immortal man would not be able to live. The deceptions, injustices, evil, lost illusions, heart throbs of life could not be borne, if the hope of a happier life did not sustain his human weakness. Buies confesses that he long denied the immortality of the soul without reflecting, but that as he advanced in life, he found it no longer deniable.

The volume concludes with a scathing article on *Le Teetotalisme — de toutes les aberrations, voilà certainement la plus irritante.*

The second book *Récits de Voyages* is a description of some of the most beautiful natural scenery in the world, as those who know

pill testify. Beginning with the Thousand Islands district the author pursues a westward course touching at Cobourg and Toronto (of the origins of which an interesting account is given). Then comes Georgian Bay with its thirty thousand islands and the marvellous fairyland of the Muskoka Lakes, where emerald isles are set in opalescent waters of ever changing charm. Finally we have *Une promenade dans le vieux Québec* and especially the monument to Montcalm and Wolfe with its memories of an empire lost and won.

The third book is entitled *Petites Chroniques pour 1837*. In a prologue the author, evidently with feeling beneath its light touch laments the fate that has overtaken him in that, as the Liberal party has increased in power, he personally has seen his fortune diminish. He also laments the fact that he is considered good only to amuse people, who then estimate his work as slight. Then he comments interestingly on French Canadian literature pointing out the difficulty of making literature a career in the midst of so many materialistic plans to be achieved. The public, too, unless it subscribes in advance, does not buy. However, a national literature is possible and should develop as a counterpoise to Anglo-American positivism and materialism, thus being in America a representative of *le génie latin*.

In general the book possesses similar qualities to the first described. The neverfailing wit and ingenuity of Buies carries the reader along, not anxious as to where he is being led, since he is reasonably certain that he will not be bored.

The most striking use has been made by Buies of the elastic form of composition which he has made peculiarly his own. Fettered by no particular rules, he has found, for his Heinesque, restless, idealistic genius, which as is the case with the minority of the world's idealists takes the satiric dress, a fitting form. The light gaiety and frivolity of his work may deceive those who are apt to be impressed by solemnity and the constant presence of the serious tone. But the native qualities of French genius are there, as so often, concealed beneath an appearance of lightness. Buies attacks, is constantly on the offensive. But he does not attack windmills. He is fighting for worthy objectives: a fine literature, honesty and consistency in political life, a wider appreciation of the natural beauties of his country which so many of its inhabitants take for granted, greater suavity of personal life.

The *chronique*, of which Buies had made such a success, was continued by others.

### Hector Fabre (1834-1901)

Hector Fabre, journalist and editor and afterwards the distinguished and charming High Commissioner of Canada to France, whose kindly aid and courtesy were always at the disposal of students and fellowcountrymen abroad, published in 1877<sup>a</sup> a collection of *Chroniques*, which appeared first in *L'Événement*. Here appear the author's impressions of current events, political, social, personal,

<sup>a</sup> At Quebec (Imprimerie de l'Événement).



vivified from time to time by a real gem of description or satire.

In a general way it must be confessed that they seem much more labored than those of Buies, for example. The wit of Buies is replaced by (at times) rather keen satire. However, we have again the ever present love of Canadian landscapes and the ability to penetrate the manœuvres of partisan politicians, which redeem in large measure the occasional feeling that space must be filled:

Outstandingly fine parts are the description of the city of Quebec in the first articles (a *causerie* read at a benefit for the sufferers of St. Roch and St. Sauveur, Nov. 5., 1866); the description of the three classes of deputies in the Quebec legislature (those who talk, those who listen and those who smoke, the real "powers that be"); the *Bals d'enfants*, ridiculously elaborate children's parties in Montreal; the *flâneurs* of many different classes in the *rue Notre-Dame* in Montréal; the particularly ingenious character of the Canadian volunteer during the Fenian raid, who, forbidden by his prospective father-in-law to come to his house, had himself quartered therein by military order so as to win over the old man; the tediousness of New Year's calls; the *chasse aux dots*.

### Alphonse Lusignan (1843-1892)

published in 1884<sup>a</sup> his *Coups d'œil et Coups de plume*, of which some are examples of genuine wit.

Of these the first are simple pathetic stories of domestic life treating of baby footsteps, the love of parents for their child, the terrible misfortune of a father, who accidentally killed his little baby, and also souvenirs of collège life.

Others of special interest, some of which are longer and more pretentious than the usual *chronique* deal with such topics as the ignorance of foreigners of Canadian geography (which used to be much worse than now thanks to recent events at Ypres and Vimy Ridge), *l'enthousiasme américain* (an unflattering picture of an American's boastfulness), *le Dimanche et les Puritains* (difficulties of an understanding of the Puritan idea of Sabbath keeping by a representative of the Latin races), *Parlons français, les Canadiens-Français à Ottawa*.

### Napoléon Legendre (1841-1907)

Napoléon Legendre's first book published in 1875 was a slender collection of children's stories: *A mes Enfants*. This was followed in 1877 by the two volumes of the *Échos de Québec* (A. Coté) containing articles and *chroniques*. These possess an unusually-fugitive character even for the *genre*, but have a light philosophical vein of special charm and also the faculty of delving into the rare corners of life. There is also a strong didactic tendency, which on the whole is to be commended.

In the first volume the article *Entre Nous* (with its hope

<sup>a</sup>) Ottawa (Free Press)

that perhaps some day the present aristocratic society may be succeeded by an *aristocratie de l'esprit*) and Sédan with its clear-sighted view of the causes leading up to France's greatest defeat deserve special mention.

In the second volume the beginning article *la Littérature canadienne* is undoubtedly the most important. The author here speaks with first hand knowledge of men and works and while too near to be impartial displays a fine critical faculty, which makes his study of importance for all students of the period.

Of others, *l'Encan* possesses a vein of true pathos, which profoundly affects the reader, that bitter pathos of France with its acute observation and its pursuit of the ultimate effect. Cf. for descriptive power the passage narrating the conditions after the auction had taken place, that auction, during which the little baby amused itself playing with the tears running down the mother's cheeks: *Une demi-heure après, il ne restait plus, dans cette maison naguère souriante et chaude, que l'horreur et le froid des murs et des planchers dégarnis et souillés. Je me trompe, il restait encore la maladie et le désespoir, qui sont peut-être allés, le lendemain, élire domicile dans la chambre somptueuse du propriétaire dont la cupidité venait, aujourd'hui, de commettre cette infamie. Car, il ne faut pas s'y tromper, après la justice des hommes, il y a encore, et heureusement, la justice de Dieu.*

The last article, on the French Canadian press, is stimulating and constructive in its criticism.

In 1890 he published an article *La Langue française au Canada*.<sup>a</sup> And finally in 1891 we have: *Mélanges, prose et vers*.<sup>b</sup> The stories in this book, used (if not intended) as a prize book for school boys, are of negligible merit as literature.

### Ernest Gagnon (1834-1915)

Ernest Gagnon known principally as a musician and artist directed his first literary effort to the folk song. In 1865 he published his work on *Les chansons populaires du Canada*, which has remained an authoritative treatise on that subject. Later, he published his *Lettre de voyage*,<sup>c</sup> which were reproduced from articles in the *Courrier du Canada* and augmented by certain notes. This collection is strongly subjective in treatment, and is probably not of as great interest as most of the others to the general reader, at any rate not now when the world is so much better known geographically and historically.

There followed studies displaying evidence of serious research: *Le Comte de Paris à Québec* 1891; *Le Fort et le Château Saint-Louis*, 1895; *Le Palais Législatif de Québec*, 1897; *Louis Jolliet*, 1902. These works denote progressive development also of literary expression.

Then in 1905 we have *Choses d'Autrefois*<sup>d</sup> one of the two books on which his future literary reputation will probably depend. It is impossible to resume here the content of these *feuilles éparses* as he

a) Québec 1890.    b) Québec 1891.    c) Québec 1876.

d) Québec ( Typ. Dussault et Proulx )

calls them in the sub-title, but the reader may rest assured of a real treat in the impressions of many different men and events passed in interesting review through the eyes of one who might well say, paraphrasing the famous line: "*cujus magnam partem vidi*". The *mœurs* of Quebec are painted by a master hand.

The other book referred to is *Feuilles volantes et Pages d'histoire*.<sup>a</sup> This book contains several articles of unusual importance together with *chroniques*. The former prove him a keen critic and lover of the development of his people and its literature and language. His article *Sept Paroles* regarding the present and future of French-Canada is illuminating. Summarized, it is to this effect:

1. We have fine traditions (in language, politeness, religion).
2. The youth in our cities are not receiving proper surveillance—are becoming too American (!)
3. It is urgent to combat luxury—and drunkenness.
4. Technical and vocational education is needed to produce the engineers, metallurgists, mechanicians to develop the natural resources of the country.
5. All deputies should have some knowledge of social science and political economy.
6. Politically, annexation to the United States is our best card—but we must not play it!
7. Colonization should be pushed.

Special mention should be made next of his articles on *Les Sauvages de l'Amérique et l'art musical* and *La Musique à Québec*.

Then for the *Pages d'Histoire* we have two fine studies of one of the early governors of New France, Louis d'Ailleboust and his wife. In these studies the heroic times of those early pioneer days live for us again. These are more than merely biographical notes; they are veritable sections of the history of the time ably penned. D'Ailleboust becomes governor March 2, 1645. With him we see the condition of affairs: constant trouble from the Indians and insufficient support from the mother country, that cardinal and fundamental error, which cost France an empire, the vast resources of which the world even yet scarcely realizes, though the Wilhelmsstrasse did. The new Governor does his best with the means at his disposal, which are alas! not sufficient to protect outlying places—nor even at times the outskirts of Quebec and Montreal! The superior forces of the Iroquois have to be met by stratagems such as the one described in the escape from Lake Onondaga.<sup>b</sup>

The two last chapters are devoted to the career of Madame Marie-Barbe de Boullogne, who, after having inured her rather timid nature to new duties in la Nouvelle France with perfect success, refused to remarry after her husband's death in spite of brilliant offers preferring to devote herself to works of charity and religion.

a) Quebec, 1910.

b) Cf for these years the *Relations des Jésuites*, Québec, 1858, 3 vol.; the *Lettres de Marie de l'Incarnation*, par Richaudeau, chez Casterman, Tournai, 1876 2 vol.; the *Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle France du P. de Charlevoix*, etc. Paris, Tiffart, 1744, 3 vol.



This narrative gives a very precious picture of the life in the new world for a representative of the *noblesse*.

### Sir Adolphe Routhier (1739-1920)

Sir Adolphe-Basile Routhier was able to take time from an eminent career as lawyer and judge to write different works of literature of considerable importance. He writes as an ardent and uncompromising Catholic and judges every thing whether works of literature, political movements or leaders from that standpoint, which has at any rate the merit of perfect consistency. A stern moralist and an advocate of absolute reforms of various sorts, his work is controversial and naturally lacks the lightness of touch often found in this period. That much of what he advocates is eminently necessary and would redound to the best national interest can scarcely be doubted. That French-Canadian literature needed a Malherbe for its *Pléiade* is also very likely true. As to whether criticism in general will judge as he does of Molière, Voltaire, Hugo, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Beaumarchais and others is another question. To see how they are looked upon from the standpoint of a French Canadian Catholic is, however, significant. It explains many matters, which would otherwise be unclear.

His first book was the *Causeries du Dimanche*.<sup>a</sup> It reminds his compatriots of the necessity of a return to first principles i. e. to a conception of the mission, which they have to fulfil on this continent, which must be preceded by a great revival of their faith. The destinies of France, Canada and the United States are discussed very frankly from the religious standpoint in a way which would find even protestant opinion not unsympathetic. Annexation to the United States is discussed and rejected—because it would be a danger to the faith on account of the unavoidable contact with American impiety and corruption. Civilization is to be determined by religion; that is the first essential. Therefore Liberalism in Canada and especially its chief centre, Montreal, is attacked. The *rights* of man have been emphasized too much since the French Revolution, declares Routhier. What about the *duties* of man? For this reason journalists and others should concern themselves not with light, frivolous things, but with the serious things of which so many are pressing and in fact supreme, if the future is to be glorious.

The part devoted to literary criticism is as is characterized above. Most nineteenth century writers (with a few exceptions like Louis Veillot) are severely criticized as having forgotten to paint the virtues of mankind and as having indicated no remedy for the ills of society which they describe. There is, however, a very interesting article on Louis Fréchette and a clever fragment in dramatic form, *La Sentinelle du Vatican*.

As it was not unnatural to expect, the views of Routhier and his direct, severe, method of attack produced a violent controversy. The gallican viewpoint was not unrepresented in Canada and there was also, of course, the English attitude, which had gained over a few.

a) Montreal, 1871



Those who crossed swords in this somewhat acrimonious debate were in particular l'abbé Casgrain and Joseph Marmette (who signed the *Silhouettes littéraires*, Placide Lépine), Hubert La Rue (who used the pseudonym Laurent for *Profilis et Grimaces*), and M. Routhier (who signed himself *Jean Piquefort* to the *Portraits et Pastels*.) The articles are collected in the *Guêpes canadiennes*.<sup>a</sup>

The writers described in the *Portraits et Pastels* are l'abbé Casgrain, F.-A.-H. LaRue, Joseph Marmette, L.-H. Fréchette, Hector Fabre, L.-O. David, L.-A. Dessaulles. Canadian literature will grow, thinks Routhier. *Ce n'est pas elle, qui voudrait se traîner dans la fange où l'on voit éclore tant de romans et de vaudevilles français. Elle est profondément religieuse et sa voix n'insulte pas Dieu, ni la religion.*

We have subsequently from his pen a number of books of travel description: *A travers l'Europe* (two volumes, 1881 and 1883), *En Canot* (1881), *A travers l'Espagne* (1889), *De Québec à Victoria* (1893), *La Reine Victoria et son jubilé* (1898), *Québec et Lévis* (1900). He is also the author of *Les Grands Drames* (1889), a work of literary criticism, *le Centurion* (1909) and *Paulina* (1918), novels, and *De l'Homme à Dieu* (1913), a work on religion.

In M. Routhier's work we must praise most of all his sturdy courage in championing the cause of morality regardless of whom or what his diatribes hit. As a fervent Catholic he embodies *in propria persona* a great characteristic of French Canadian literature. It is perhaps to be regretted that he should not have selected other *genres* as vehicles for his noteworthy contributions to his country's cause.

### Ernest Myrand (1854- )

began with *Une fête de Noël sous Jacques Cartier*.<sup>b</sup> Like M. Routhier M. Myrand has a very serious purpose e. g. to cause his fellow-countrymen: *connaître et lire nos archives* and *prendre par l'imagination ceux-là, qui ne veulent pas de bon gré se livrer à l'étude*. The framework of his story is that he represents himself as meeting at eleven thirty the night of December 24, 1885, the ghost of his friend l'abbé Laverdière (who had died twelve years before) and in the course of this dream he visits with the abbé the *fête de Noël* of Cartier and his crews in 1535. The condition of affairs faced by Cartier and his men, their trials and tribulations, their steadfast faith and courage notwithstanding their difficulties are vividly described by the author. Scenes of the early days are revived with graphic power. The solemn tones of bells of the midnight mass reverberate throughout. The whole is based on most careful researches,<sup>c</sup> the book being provided with appendices, notes, etc. Nothing has been

a) Ottawa, 1881, very rare.

b) I have used the second edition, Québec, 1890. 1st ed. Québec 1888

c) As he tells us in the preface, p.ii. he used as basis the reimpression of the very rare original edition of the *Relation du Second Voyage de Jacques Cartier*. Paris: Librairie Tross, 1863, and also the Canadian edition of the *Voyages de Jacques Cartier*, pub. in 1843 under the auspices of the SOC. LITT. et HIST. de QUÉBEC.

left undone in fact to reconstitute for the reader a great historical picture of one of the outstanding events of Canadian and indeed of world history.

Amidst the fairy like beauty of a Canadian Winter night we approach with the author the three boats of Cartier the hundred and twenty ton *Grande Hermine*, the sixty ton *Courlieu* (afterwards christened the *Petite Hermine*), the forty ton *Émérillon*. The service for the occasion is in progress, conducted by Dom Guillaume le Breton on board the *Grande Hermine* and all the bold mariners of St. Malo are present except alas! the numerous sick of the scurvy, who are on the *Petite Hermine*, which we visit next to visualize the price paid by some of the adventurers for their wonderful voyages of discovery. One, Philippe Rougemont, has died with memories of beautiful Brittany in his mind. Later there is the further celebration of a true Noël in the Breton fashion. Then finally we have the picture dissolve. The author finds himself back in the reality of a back seat in *Notre-Dame de Québec*. The organ and an orchestra are discoursing sweet, lulling music—and the historical dream is over.

M. Myrand's second book is *Noëls Anciens de la Nouvelle-France*<sup>a</sup>, a very careful, detailed study based on five collections of French songs, preserved at the *Hôtel-Dieu* of Quebec.

He is also the author of *Sir William Phipps devant Québec, Histoire d'un siège*,<sup>b</sup> *M. de la Colombière, orateur Frontenac et ses amis*<sup>c</sup>, *Dialogue de Pageants, représentés aux fêtes du Tricentenaire de Québec en 1908*<sup>d</sup> and of a number of historical studies: *Notre-Dame de Foy*, *Le Frère Marc* (Louis Contant), *La Chapelle Champlain*, *Madame D'Ailleboust et le Dictionnaire Généalogique des familles canadiennes* published in the *Bulletin des Recherches Historiques*.

M. Myrand's life is one distinguished by signal services, artistic and literary, to his country, which is all the more remarkable as in spite of these labors, he has also been able to occupy a series of important offices in the province of Quebec.

Appreciators of fine literature will look forward with great anticipation to other works from M. Myrand's gifted pen.

### Abbé V. A. Huard (1853- )

published in 1897<sup>f</sup> his first book of travel description entitled *Labrador et Anticosti*. The general reader will probably be most interested in the latter part with its allusions to the "King of Anticosti", M. Menier. But the possible future developments of that vast unknown land, Labrador, may interest him as well. The style is light and somewhat disconnected. The author, however, has an eye always for the characteristic and unexpected.

a) Montreal, (Beauchemin), 1913, 3rd edition.

b) Quebec, 1893, (L. J. Demers et Frère).

c) Montreal, 1898, (Cadieux et Derome)

d) Quebec, 1902 Cf. *Frontenac intime*, a succeeding study pub. in the *Journal de François* 1905-6.

e) Quebec, 1908.

f) 1897, Montreal and Paris.

His second book *Impressions d'un Passant*<sup>g</sup> is a narrative of his experiences in America, Europe and Africa.

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g) Quebec, 1906 (Dussault et Proulx).







## CHAPTER II

# Literary Revival 1900-1921

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There are very definite reasons for affirming that during the last fifteen or so years there has been a renaissance of French Canadian literature. The literature of France has been made accessible as never before. Improved means of communication have facilitated the visits and study trips of Canadians to France, whence they have returned with fresh inspiration.

At length a real public sufficiently numerous has been secured. This was lacking to the pioneers, who had perforce to labor without adequate encouragement either personal or financial. Cf : "It (i. e. the Quebec Act) has kept alive in British North America a French nation never so united or self-conscious as at the present time".<sup>a</sup>

Troubles undergone by the French Canadians in provinces where they are in the minority, always a sure method of promoting a cause, have greatly increased the interest of the people of Quebec in their language and literature. The public interest has been thus stirred as never before. National solidarity has been achieved.

In 1902 was founded at Quebec under the auspices of Laval University *la Société du Parler français au Canada*. This organization by its monthly review, *le Parler français*, has stimulated very considerably the development of French Canadian language and literature.

Then we have at the end of the last century the formation at Montreal of a *cénacle* of writers, who have by mutual encouragement and by united efforts accomplished much in prose and especially in poetry.

Last and by no means least we have definitely established as a *genre* literary criticism, without which no literature can hope to endure and make progress. In large measure the credit in this branch must be given to Professor Camille Roy of Laval University, whose fine sense of literary values and keen appreciation of literary art has enabled him with a delicacy of sympathy combined with necessary firmness of judgment to guide and counsel in apt and constructive manner the writers of the newer movement, which he adorns in no small measure.

### Louis Fréchette (1839-1908)

In 1900 Louis Fréchette, the well known poet, published his Christmas in French Canada<sup>b</sup>. His aim, as stated in the preface

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a) Victor Coffin, *The Province of Quebec and the Early American Revolution*, University of Wisconsin Bulletin Vol. I., 1897, p. 277.

b) In English, Toronto, 1899; in French, Toronto, 1900.



was to do something to popularize among English readers the manners, customs, traditions and popular beliefs of French Canada. He takes the reader among the adventurers of the Far West, the dwellers in town and country in Quebec. The stories, he says, are true.

The reader will add that they are interesting. Told in a vivacious and artistic manner, each very different from any other in the group, they have the appeal of true heart interest. They are simple, naïve like the characters they represent, but they have the latters' rugged strength and genuine fidelity. The *milieu* in which they are set, the joyous, far-famed winter time of "Our Lady of the Snows", those snows which are not at all as bleak and repelling as many suppose, but fraught with the liveliest pleasures and the merriest of outdoor sports, is pictorially perfect in its representation. The snow white of a Canadian Winter is everywhere, but the colors of filial affection, of lovers' dreams, of children's piety, of ardent religion are thrown against its white gleam in a contrast the more striking.

One must not forget also to mention his *Originaux et Détraqués*<sup>a</sup> (1892) a series of portraits, of *tableaux de mœurs* of a kind, which have an undoubted merit for those who would understand fully French Canadian life.

Feuillet 31a

### Abbé Camille Roy (1870- )

In 1912 was published *Les Propos Canadiens*<sup>b</sup> of Professor Camille Roy, the distinguished educator, to whose efforts in literary criticism is due probably more than to any other single cause recent developments in French Canadian literature. These articles which appeared in *le Soleil* are described by the author as : *des fragments d'une conversation que plus d'une fois nous avons reprise avec le public* and again, recalling his earlier introduction : *Les Propos du Samedi seront avec tous ceux qui voudront nous lire un échange très simple et cordial, d'impressions, d'idées, de souvenirs, d'espérances, de joies et de tristesses, selon que le soir où il les faudra tenir, il y aura lieu d'être confiants, heureux ou chagrins.* In these writings, which savor of the essay rather than of the *chronique* or which represent, if you like, the *chronique* in its loftiest form, all the author's grave, kindly idealism is displayed, together with a wealth of penetrating observation. In beautifully clear cut prose worthy of the best traditions of French literature M. Roy seeks to express above all the truth and the ways which lead to it. In the different writings grouped as : *Propos Rustiques, Propos de Morale, Propos Patriotiques, Propos Scolaires, Propos Littéraires*, we have observations, lessons, concepts, exhortations on subjects regarding which the author is eminently fitted to write because he knows them thoroughly. It is easy to write for the day, to appeal to the popular taste, to follow the easier way of contributing to the self-indulgence of the mob—

a) Montreal, 1892. b) Quebec, 1912.

and this is unfortunately rather the rule than the exception in many parts of the world today. But, possessed of a passionate desire for the best development of his race, M. Roy has left no opportunity go by to combine judicious didacticism with his treatment of topics drawn from actuality.

The first series, *Propos Rustiques*, in graphic word-pictures recalls from the author's reminiscences life in old Quebec. Beginning with *le Vieux Hangar*, which is a genuine masterpiece of description, we have presented various characteristic scenes such as *le Journal au Foyer* (which affords an opportunity to urge the necessity of dignified journalism—a favorite theme with M. Roy), *Vieilles Cloches et Vieilles Églises* with its exquisite depiction of the church of Saint-Vallier, *Leçons des Vacances* with its exhortation to proper study including the forests, flowers and sea and *Noël Rustique*, the author's recollections of a Christmas of long ago before modern improvements changed the lighting and music of the church. In these articles intimate in tone, wherein is apparent the author's deep love for scenes of a beloved home, there is not forgotten the milieu of picturesque Quebec.

In the *Propos de Morale*, which follow, the didactic note is of course very prominent. Sobriety, purity, industry, studiousness are advocated. Exemplary warnings from contemporary life are cited. As usual, solicitude for the welfare and proper upbringing of the youth is in the foreground. Philosophical interludes and timely allusions to classical writings are judiciously interwoven. This is especially noteworthy in the three last: *Idéal de Jeunesse*, *Une Âme de Jeune* and *Lectures des Jeunes Gens*.

The reader interested in international politics will read with great attention the next series, *Propos Patriotiques*. The last of this series: *Le Couronnement du Roi* (an address given in the basilica of Quebec City, June 22, 1911 on the occasion of the coronation of George V. in Westminster Abbey) affords the views of one of the outstanding leaders of French Canadian thought. This is much more than a mere "duty" address. The striking breadth of view of M. Roy is nowhere better illustrated than here, where he expresses the qualities of tolerance and liberty characteristic of British administration. The church is described as a bulwark of constituted authority. The spread of social atheism is attributed to the weakening of true religion. Britain, where royal power is buttressed by religion, is praised as a confederation, which affords ample room for the development of its constituent states.

It is not too much to say that M. Roy rising far above the pettiness and temporal character of contemporary political struggles, (bitter enough in all conscience in view of the circumstances) has been able here to visualize, as did Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the potentialities of the British Empire as a genuine league of nations, the first practical, working league, indeed, of such a kind, a league in short of much greater possibilities for the future of the world than many of its more narrowminded administrators and officials even have been able to appreciate.

In others of this series such as : *Pour la langue française*, *Pour l'extension de la langue française* and *Québec, ville française*, he deals with the rôle of French culture in the world and shows himself an ardent and jealous advocate of its fine qualities. Naturally enough this is a matter which is peculiarly dear to French Canadians as well as to Frenchmen generally, but it is also much more, one which the rest of the world should value more generally than it does. The development advocated by M. Roy takes away no whit from other cultures and adds a great deal of untold value to the sum total of the progress of civilization, proponents of wide *uniformity* (a constant and seductive idea of mankind) notwithstanding. The function of French as the auxiliary international language *par excellence*, which has been lately recognized by the great majority, is outlined with convincing arguments in *Pour la langue française*, which possesses special interest as it was an address given at the annual meeting of *la Société du Parler Français du Canada*, of which the author was then (December, 1906) president.

In the *Propos Scolaires* one is not surprised to find Professor Roy a champion of disinterested culture. Without doubt he assigns technical and vocational to the highest place that its most ardent advocates could desire, but is definitely and warmly opposed to making colleges into mere factories. Also, as one would expect, the importance of religious instruction is faithfully delineated, a point of view to which many leaders even in what he calls the "neutral schools" are coming, in recognition of current conditions of much gravity. The Roman Catholic church has been uniformly consistent in this matter and despite the difficulties which sectarianism presents in protestant and state schools, it is evident that drastic changes will have to be made, if the youth of today are to be guided aright.

Lastly come the *Propos Littéraires*.

In *Journalisme décadent* the author with a clear sense of the importance of good journalism to proper national development stringently inveighs against the "yellow" press, which has been gaining in influence, and points the way to presenting the truth (of which no one could be a better model than M. Roy himself).

His review of *Chez les Français du Canada*<sup>a</sup> by Jean Lionnet affords M. Roy an opportunity to describe some of the chief resemblances and differences existing between French Canada and the mother country and to emphasize certain of the outstanding characteristics of French Canadian civilization.

In his review of *Les Arpents de Neige*<sup>b</sup> of Joseph-Émile Poirier there is an occasion, well taken advantage of, to deal with a question which is very dear to the French Canadian public, i. e. the development of the French speaking settlements of the West, which they fear may be engulfed in the rapid and striking progress of those English-speaking provinces. The subject of the book, which is not the great conflict of the Plains of Abraham, but the Riel Rebellion of 1885 opens up this much vexed question and the criticism of M.

a) Roman canadien, Paris, 1909. Nouvelle Librairie Nationale.

b) Paris, 1908. Plon.



Roy presents the French speaking side of a little known matter.

To sum up, it is at once seen that M. Roy is not interested save in those great major matters, which are of concern to his people and that the truth, as he presents it, cannot be impugned by any fair-minded reader. The future of French Canada cannot be in doubt when possessed of such leaders (rare in all countries) as M. Roy, who brings to his task all the qualities of ripe scholarship combined with a critical faculty of the highest order.

The author's weighty material is conveyed to the reader in faultless language. The style is clear and trenchant, rising at times to the heights of eloquence. And back of this is clearly felt the spirit of the man, animated by the most admirable concern for the welfare in every respect of the race, which he loves.

### M. Adjutor Rivard (1886- )

is the author (1919)<sup>a</sup> of *Chez Nous*, which is a review of the various aspects of French Canadian life beginning with *la Maison* and working outward. The substance is the plain, gray, but solid, substantial, homespun life of the pious family of old Quebec. This is told in sections separate, but united by the main theme, in a style of masterly simplicity. It is animated by the spirit of genuine religion and true patriotism. Telling, simple, direct, it has undoubtedly spoken with effect to the hearts of numerous readers as the third edition attests.

M. Rivard, who was until recently the worthy secretary-general of *la Société du Parler français au Canada* is also the author of articles on philological and literary topics in the *Bulletin* of this association.

### Abbé Lionel Groulx (1878- )

composed several tales published in 1916<sup>b</sup> under the title of *Les Rapallages*. They are sincere, homely little narratives, often pathetic, with a strong Catholic coloring. One, *Une leçon de patriotisme* suggests somewhat the *Dernière Classe of Daudet*. An indirect but nevertheless powerful plea is made to maintain the ancient traditions and the true faith. While these are sketches, lacking in any kind of regular plot, they breathe the very air of the people and charm by their presentation of the plain life of the people.

### The Chroniqueurs

appear also in this last period.

M. ALBERT LOZEAU presented in book form to the public in 1911 and 1912 his *Billets du soir*.<sup>c</sup> They have a very distinct individuality, are in many respects quite different from others. They are short, very pungent, ingenious. Their crisp directness is not, however, *de longue haleine*, cannot be, probably. While they deal with the smaller things of life, these are nevertheless very often just the things which concern us most strikingly.

a) Quebec b) Montreal c) Montreal.

So also M. LÉON LORRAIN has given the public his *Chroniques*<sup>a</sup>, which are short, smart, witty, odd satires on society and events. M. Lorrain has the true and rather rare gift of intriguing his readers. He never bores and the form and style of his *chroniques* are almost always exceedingly happy. It is true that his gay badinage does not go very deep. There is no striving after deep philosophy. But there are many ways of approaching the truth, some of which are by apparent frivolity.

He also possesses in large measure the cosmopolitan spirit. Any part of the world may on occasion furnish him with the text for his short screed. This is essentially the French nature at its best. His introductory articles in the form of a dramatic sketch reminds one somehow of Abel Hermant. One would wish for more of the same type.

### Women Writers

Finally, as might be expected in these modern days French Canada has also its women writers, not numerous as yet, but very probably destined to become more so.

From the pen of FRANÇOISE (Mlle Barry) we have *Le Journal de Françoise*, 1902-1909; a number of *chroniques* in la Revue de Mme Dandurand, *Le Coin du Feu*, and her *Correspondance hebdomadaire* in *La Patrie* of Montreal.<sup>b</sup> MADELEINE (Mme Gleason-Huguenin) has written *le Premier Péché* (1902) and *Le Long du Chemin* (1912). FADETTE has issued the four series of *Lettres de Fadette* (1914, 1915, 1916 and 1918).

As might be expected the rôle of women and children is very prominent. The different aspects of family life, the sufferings of the sex which pays for the wanderings and exigencies of man are faithfully delineated. By this I do not mean to imply that there is a definite, purposeful crusade of feminism manifested. Far from that indeed is the truth. But naturally and unconsciously perhaps these writers address themselves to the soul of feminine readers with representation of the problems of the feminine mind and heart. The tone is generally gently melancholy or else poignantly sad. Resigned cheerfulness or understanding compassion for joy, which must be taken by youth before it passes, is in general the height of the contrasting emotion, although vivacious passages occur. There is a deep religious feeling throughout together with a love for nature and the precious soil of the native land.

Madeleine adds a pronounced love for France, which is perhaps significant. In her *Le Long du Chemin*, for example, which is an interesting collection of *contes*, *légendes*, portraits and studies, she begins with an article which is almost an invocation *Vive la France* a note sounded again in several places particularly in *le Fort de Chambly*. Studies of outstanding figures in French Canadian life such as Émile Nelligan and J. Israel Tarte together with others like *Les*

a) Editions du "Devoir", Montreal, 1912.

b) I am greatly obliged to M. Ernest Myrand, Litt. D. for having furnished me with these facts.

*Impossibles Départs* (the fruitless attempt of a son to take his parents with him to the land of gold and excitement, the United States) bear specially on the love of country, which is so definitely a French Canadian characteristic.

The great majority, however, of the different parts of the book concern the life of the lowly. Guided by sure, sympathetic realism, we are permitted to enter into their joys and sorrows, more of the latter by far than the former, since the poor, are more unprotected against the misfortunes of life. Love, maternal, conjugal, is the only everrecurring relief, the one consolation which is constant, though even this is unfulfilled by the frailty of man or the inscrutable purposes of God. When man falls, however, woman as represented here will pardon, a tribute to her nobility of soul, as she illustrates particularly well in the *conte* told in letters, *A travers la Vie*.

Graceful, philosophical, much more cheerful, though also tinged with melancholy, are the letters of Fadette (published as columns in *le Devoir*). The duties of life, the folly of the worldly woman are strong elements in the letters, which are often little sermonettes directed against the undue pursuit of pleasure, the scorn for domestic duties, the failure to perceive the attractiveness of the commonplace ordinary things of life or those which seem ordinary. The real identity of Fadette is concealed by a careful editor, but one might deduce that she is one accustomed to the *salons* and the intimate circles of the great when the desire is entertained to leave the picturesque retreat from which she usually writes. Extreme delicacy of perception and fineness of sentiment is hers and her writing is enveloped in the tenderness of truest sympathy and understanding of one who apparently has also known suffering.

### Conclusion

In concluding there are some eloquent facts, which may justifiably be reiterated although they are almost self-evident. As we re-survey the long period under discussion we are sure that there has been a great and progressive improvement and development in the French Canadian *récit* and *chronique*. Furthermore there is every reason to suppose that this development will go on with everincreasing rapidity. Possessing as they do all the elements of real freedom together with the natural resources to support a very much larger population indeed, there can hardly fail to come the day and that speedily when French Canadian authors possessed of racial qualities of splendid excellence combined with the independence of a great new land will rank with the world's best. Then will be known the true worth and sublime spirit of those pioneers, who despite many difficulties and discouragements have blazed the trail of glory.

Two main points strike the outside observer as of special moment in aiding this development.

First, there should be a still closer relation to the mother country. The former cleavage was well based, there is no doubt. But that the spirit of the new France of Europe may be able and



should as a lofty obligation endeavor to bridge this formerly wide separation, one may well believe.

Next there is the supreme duty of greater thoroughness and greater solicitude in the matter of education, particularly higher education. It is with no failure to realize not only the noble efforts of the past (efforts made with insufficient financial support) nor the other fact that at the present time this is in many respects the problem of all nations, that this is said.

As one observes the supreme necessity of attaining the highest possible development of civilization whether in literature or elsewhere one is impressed more than ever before by the tremendous need of much greater thoroughness and emphasis on genuine study, which has of late on this continent at least seemed crowded out by a multitude of minor matters, and more particularly the need for giving every aid of prestige and power to disinterested culture as a counterpoise to the extraordinary development of materialism. Unless this is done, the war will have been fought in vain and the literature as well as the life of nations as of individuals will be irrevocably lost. All honor to the constant cherishing in the past, as revealed constantly in the books illustrative of the *genres* concerned, of noble aims and high ideals by the teachers of Quebec. Under their fostering care for the moral tone of their students the course of French Canadian literature cannot fail to be successful.

A democratic people more than the inhabitants of an autocracy needs education. Considering the problem from this standpoint there can hardly fail to be in French Canada, a present need as never before for the most generous support financially and otherwise for the instructional forces of the country, for on them peculiarly depends the future progress of so fine and so interesting a literary movement.









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